

THE MARRIAGE CYCLE: SELECTION OF BRIDE

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among the Kols living out in the jungles and away from larger centres would be simpler. We were therefore surprised by how consistently various groups gave us similar information. It should be noted that it is not claimed that these customs are peculiar to the Kols. Investigation among the simple village people of Hindu background will probably show that all over this area there is a great similarity in the marriage customs, the details may vary, but not the main outlines.

(1) *Selection of the Girl.* When a father considers it time to arrange a marriage for his son it is he who should take the initiative. The first thing he should do is to make some private preliminary enquiries. It is against the custom for the parents of the girl to make any direct advances. In this type of marriage neither the boy nor the girl has anything to say concerning his or her future mate. It is entirely in the hands of the elders. The boy's father may ask some relatives in another village to be on the lookout for a suitable girl, and he will consult the *panch* of his own village to see if any one of them knows of a girl who would make a suitable match for his son. As a result two or three names are suggested as possibilities. The next thing that is ordinarily done is to try to catch a glimpse of the girl without her parents knowing about it. It is best if this can be done by the boy's father, but he may send some trusted member of the *panch* to carry out the investigations for him. If the results are satisfactory, the boy's father reports to his *panch* and asks them if there is any objection to such a marriage. This is done to guard against a marriage which would be objectionable from any angle. The *panch* is usually pretty well posted on matters of relationship, and its opinion, in the absence of written records (for such are never kept by Kols), is authoritative. The father of the boy then arranges to see the girl's father privately, and when he goes he usually takes three or four of his friends from his village with him. In the interview that follows he does not come to the point immediately, but may talk about general matters for some time before bringing up the main question. Mutual enquiries are made concerning the status of the two families, the health of the children, etc. The friends of the father vouch for the accuracy and truth of his statements. If both parties find themselves in accord and if the girl's father is willing to give his daughter, the matter is then with the girl's father and it is he who now consults his *panch* and makes any private enquiries that he sees fit. Up till this time the matter is considered as strictly private and if either of the parties is not satisfied with any of the details and does not wish to follow it up the matter may be dropped without prejudice.